HIDDEN HOUSING PRODUCTION:

CONVERSION ACTIVITY IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than half of the units added to Boston's rental housing stock in the last five years came from sources other than new construction. Conversion activity, including both the transformation of non-residential structures to dwelling units and the reconfiguration of existing residential buildings, is now an important source of housing production in many Boston neighborhoods. However, little is known about the contribution these units make to the current shortage of affordable rental housing in the city. Misconceptions and a lack of solid information cloud our understanding of conversion activity and its effect on the city's neighborhoods.

This study attempts to shed light on the "hidden" production of housing in Boston through two important sources of information:

1. City records consisting of property owners' requests to add dwelling units to their buildings.

2. A survey of 603 homeowners drawn from three neighborhoods where conversion activity is known to be prevalent, including an "oversample" of homeowners who followed the proper legal procedures in adding one or more dwelling units to their homes.

The first source was used to analyze the magnitude and characteristics of dwelling units added legally in the city. The second source, the survey, attempted to get information about legal and illegal conversion activity, the occupants of converted dwellings, and the attitudes of Boston residents to conversion activity in their neighborhoods. The following list presents highlights of the overall findings.

- An increasing population and a declining average household size have put enormous pressure on Boston's housing market. Conversion activity may be relieving some of this pressure by adapting the inherited inventory to the new shape of current housing demand.

<u>Legal Conversion Activity</u>

- More units have been added through the conversion of non-residential buildings such as factories or warehouses than through the addition of apartments to existing residential structures. A total of 2,248 units were created out of non-residential buildings between 1974 and 1984.

- However, the conversion of residential structures is increasing at a faster rate and is more difficult to track due to the higher number of undocumented conversion

projects. According to city records, 1,093 units were legally added to residential structures between 1974 and 1984. The survey results indicate that this count may miss half of all the units added to residential buildings over this period.

- The conversion of 48 lodging houses over the last eleven years represents a serious reduction in the supply of transient housing. The units created through the conversion of a lodging house to permanent, independent dwellings do not serve the same lower-income and elderly population that traditionally relied on single-room occupancy accomodations.

- Central Boston neighborhoods received the lion's share of legally added dwelling units. Other neighborhoods with high activity were Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, Allston-Brighton, and Charlestown. However, all Boston neighborhoods recorded significant numbers of legal conversions.

- One- and two-family houses were the structure types most frequently converted, although the total number of dwelling units added to large multi-family buildings was higher.

Survey Results

- Eight percent of 505 randomly sampled homeowners in the South End, Jamaica Plain and Allston-Brighton reported that they had added or were in the process of adding an independent dwelling unit to their property.

- Nearly all the units added to owner-occupied dwellings are rented. The median rent in all three neighborhoods is $500, and three-quarters of the units added were one-bedroom or studio apartments.

- About half of the units added by homeowners were created by subdividing the living space in a larger, single dwelling. One quarter converted a basement, 16 percent converted an attic, and the remainder converted garages or rooming houses.

- Only 13 percent of the converters provided off-street parking for their tenants.

- Converters tended to have higher incomes and were concentrated in the 30 to 50 age group. The occupants of the added units tended to have much lower incomes and most were in their 20s or 30s.

- The South End had the highest incidence of conversion activity and Allston-Brighton the lowest of the three neighborhoods. South End converters also tended to spend

more on the conversion and to do less of the work themselves.

- Eleven percent of the non-converting homeowners have considered adding a separate dwelling unit to their property. More than half of this group still hope to add the unit in the future.

- One-quarter of all homeowners interviewed were aware of conversion activity on their street. Awareness was highest in the South End and roughly equal in Jamaica Plain and Allston-Brighton.

- Of those aware of apartments that had been added recently to buildings on their street, 36 percent reported that these additions had a negative effect on their neighborhood, 28 percent reported a positive effect, 27 percent found no effect, and 9 percent said that there was a "mixed" effect or that they did not know.

- Residents of the South End possessed the most favorable view of conversion activity in their neighborhood, although some expressed a concern about displacement. This favorable view was based on a perception that conversion activity had upgraded properties and brought in good neighbors.

- Residents of Allston-Brighton expressed the most negative reactions to conversion activity. Parking and traffic congestion and an influx of "transients" were the two most commonly reported reasons for this attitude.

- Fifty-three percent of the randomly sampled converters had not obtained a variance before adding a unit, and 11 percent had not taken out a building permit.

- The most commonly cited "major factor" in the converters' decision to add a unit was "needed the rental income to cover my mortgage payments."

- About one-fifth of the occupants of the converted units were relatives of the property owner.

I. INTRODUCTION

Boston faces a severe shortage of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income residents. Indicators of this problem include:

- o Rapidly rising rents
- o Persistently low vacancy rates
- o Long waiting lists for subsidized housing, and
- o A population increasing faster than the supply of newly constructed housing.

Under conditions such as these, property owners who create additional units out of existing buildings have become an important source of less expensive rental housing for many Boston residents. City officials and local residents agree that this conversion activity has increased, but they know little about the actual number of units that have been added. Moreover, there is little agreement concerning the effect that the converted units have had on Boston's neighborhoods. A lack of information has reduced city options in developing a coherent policy for conversions. This study provides a starting point for that process.

Other Cities' Experiences

Recent studies in other U.S. cities have attempted to address the issues raised by conversion activity. In 1981, the Tri-State Regional Planning Commission, a non-profit research organization serving the New York Metropolitan Area, surveyed local officials in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut to find out the extent of conversion activity in the region. Of the 186 municipalities responding, 71 percent reported the existence of conversion activity within their jurisdictions. Local officials in roughly one-third of the communities with conversions believed that conversion activity was desirable, while 46 percent found it undesirable and 21 percent were undecided or ambivalent. The most frequently checked answers to the question, "Why do you consider housing conversion desirable?" were "Allows older couples to keep large homes" and "Allows young residents to stay in area." The most frequently cited negative effects were, "Changes single-family character of neighborhood," "Increases traffic and parking [problems]," and "Increases possibility of code violations."

Many jurisdictions have responded to the types of concerns expressed by the New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut officials by adopting an accessory apartment ordinance that allows conversion activity in single-family neighborhoods under certain conditions. Some communities restrict conversion privileges to elderly home-

owners. In other cases, converting homeowners have been required to

- Provide off-street parking
- Keep exterior alterations in line with the neighborhood's single-family character, or
- Meet or exceed a minimum lot size.

Various regulatory policies regarding conversion activity have been tried throughout the United States. These have been described by Patrick Hare [1981] for the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area and Martin Gellen [1985] for California. In discussing the experience of Fairfax County, Virginia, and Montgomery County, Maryland, in suburban Washington, Hare reports that the passage of an accessory dwelling unit ordinance gives homeowners who want to add an apartment legally a way to do so. Many homeowners came forward within a year after the passage of the Fairfax County ordinance in order to legalize apartments they had added previously. In a recent working paper, Gellen discusses state-initiated alternatives to traditional "R-1" zones:

> In California, where the state Supreme Court has declared restrictive definitions of "family" in zoning laws to be unconstitutional, the state legislature has passed an enabling act (SB1534) which gives local governments the power to permit accessory units in single-family zones . . . .[1]

Issues for Boston

The city of Boston currently has no ordinance that explicitly allows the addition of secondary units to homes in areas zoned for single-family use. Except in areas zoned for apartments, where additional dwelling units are allowed if all other zoning and building codes are met, a variance or "conditional use permit" is needed before conversion can take place legally anywhere in the city. No official conversion "policy" has ever been put forward, either by the Mayor's office or the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), other than the universal agreement that "a lot of it must be going on."

Any City policy dealing with conversions must take into account a complex set of issues. On the one hand, conversion activity yields benefits for many renters and owners in Boston. The additional rental units provide an escape valve in Boston's highly

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1. Martin Gellen, Accessory Apartments and Single-Family Zoning, Working Paper No. 406 (Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California, Berkeley, June 1983).

pressured housing market. Conversion activity has led to reinvestment in older, deteriorating structures, including many vacant properties. Finally, the survey of 603 Boston homeowners included in this report suggests that converters find significant financial advantages to fixing up and renting out a basement, attic or garage.

On the other hand, the surrounding neighborhood may pay the price for converters' and renters' benefits. An increase in rental units can lead to parking and traffic congestion in the surrounding neighborhood, negative effects frequently cited in interviews with residents. Long-term residents also complain about the noisy, new neighbors who move into the converted apartments. Finally, most of the properties with illegal accessory apartments--and many others that did convert legally--have not been re-assessed to reflect the new occupancy. Comparison of the number of units reported by homeowners to be on their property with the records of the City Assessor shows that both legal and illegal additions are rarely put onto the tax rolls. Residents of these units have access to the same public services as other Boston residents, and because the owner does not pay the appropriate property tax, these properties represent a fiscal drain on the city's tax base.

Scope of the Study

This report synthesizes existing information on conversions in Boston, as well as bringing to light new data on the phenomenon and how it affects the city's citizens.

Local analysts have long been aware that increases in the supply of Boston's housing stock have not been limited to new construction (Clay, Goetze, Whittlesey, et. al.). Dwelling units have been added to Boston's residential buildings in a variety of ways over the years:

- Owners of apartment buildings have squeezed extra units out of their properties by reconfiguring existing layouts.
- Owners of triple-deckers and town houses have converted attics and basements into separate apartments.
- Single-family homeowners have converted garages or carriage houses.

Much of this conversion activity has remained undocumented because property owners added units without obtaining the required building permits or getting the necessary variances from the Board of Appeal. The second chapter of this report puts Boston's situation in the context of national and regional statistics relating to housing production. Next comes a description of the regulatory process that monitors conversions in Boston. This section also includes an analysis of the variances obtained between 1974 and 1984 for the purposes of adding or subtracting dwelling units from

existing buildings. The fourth chapter discusses the results of a survey designed to shed light on undocumented conversion activity. The survey results address:

- How such units are produced
- Where they are located
- Who lives in them
- The magnitude of conversion activity in three Boston neighborhoods
- Legal versus illegal additions, and
- Attitudes of nearby residents toward these additional units.

Finally, the last chapter suggests implications this study holds for Boston's housing policy. This conclusion contains recommendations for mitigating the negative effects of conversion activity and encouraging the addition of affordable rental units to existing buildings so that these additions are not disruptive to the surrounding neighborhood.

II. CONVERSION ACTIVITY AND BOSTON HOUSING TRENDS

Conversion activity has been acknowledged recently as an important source of housing throughout the nation. Estimates vary, but the data in Table 1, from the Census Bureau's Components of Inventory Change (CINCH) report, indicate that conversion activity contributed 233,000 units a year to the nation's housing supply in the mid to late '70s. In 1982 U.S. Housing and Urban Development researcher Duane McGough showed that additions to the housing supply from sources other than new construction have now hit the highest levels since records of these "other additions" have been kept.[2]

Table 1 also shows that metropolitan areas in the Northeast contained a large share (36.6%) of the national conversion activity recorded by the CINCH data. However, as housing analysts William Apgar of the Joint Center for Housing Studies and Martin Gellen of U.C., Berkeley have pointed out, conversion activity is not limited to older cities in the Northeast. The data in Table 1 support their observations; more than half of all conversions occurred outside the Northeast, and non-metropolitan areas captured 29% of all conversion activity measured by the Census Bureau. Nevertheless, unlike the South and West where the amount of conversion activity is small relative to total housing production, conversions account for a larger share of additions to the inventory in the Northeast. Table 1 shows that conversions contributed approximately 40 percent of the additions to the housing inventory in the urban Northeast, a rate four times higher than in any other Census region.

Conversions in the Boston Metropolitan Area 1974-1981

The Boston metropolitan area contains a disproportionately large share of the Northeast region's conversion activity. Table 2 shows that there were an estimated 60,000 dwelling units added through conversion between 1974 and 1981 in the Boston SMSA, compared to 600,000 conversions in urban areas in the Northeast

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2. Report of the President's Commission on Housing, 1982.

TABLE 1
CONVERSIONS VERSUS NEW CONSTRUCTION
United States, 1973-1980
(In Thousands of Dwelling Units)

	CONVERSIONS		NEW CONSTRUCTION		CONVERSIONS' SHARE OF UNITS ADDED
	#	%	#	%	%
Northeast					
Metropolitan Areas	599	36.6%	947	7.2%	38.7%
Non-Metropolitan Areas	127	7.8%	474	3.6%	21.1%
North Central					
Metropolitan Areas	155	9.5%	1,650	12.6%	8.6%
Non-Metropolitan Areas	125	7.6%	1,123	8.6%	10.0%
South					
Metropolitan Areas	268	16.4%	2,926	22.3%	8.4%
Non-Metropolitan Areas	147	9.0%	2,756	21.0%	5.1%
West					
Metropolitan Areas	144	8.8%	2,398	18.3%	5.7%
Non-Metropolitan Areas	70	4.3%	843	6.4%	7.7%
Total Metropolitan Areas	1,166	71.3%	7,921	60.4%	12.8%
Total Non-Metro Areas	470	28.7%	5,197	39.6%	8.3%
Total Units	1,635	100.0%	13,117	100.0%	11.1%

Conversions include: Units added to residential structures; non-residential buildings converted to residential use; and renovation of exposed, damaged or condemned units. U.S. Census definitions of regions used.

Source: Components of Inventory Change, Series HC80-4-1, (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1983)

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF HOUSING UNITS BUILT BEFORE 1970
IN THE BOSTON METROPOLITAN AREA
(In thousands of Dwelling Units)

	1974 STOCK	1974-81 LOSSES	NET 1974 STOCK	1981 STOCK	GAINS (LOSSES)	PERCENTAGE CHANGE 1974-81
YEAR BUILT						
Owner Occupied Units						
1960-69	68.7	0.4	68.3	73.8	5.5	8.1%
1950-59	90.2	0.0	90.2	84.2	(6.0)	-6.7%
1940-49	38.1	0.1	38.0	38.1	0.1	0.3%
pre 1940	255.8	4.2	251.6	271.7	20.1	8.0%
Total	452.8	4.7	448.1	467.8	19.7	4.4%
Renter Occupied						
1960-69	56.3	0.7	55.6	65.4	9.8	17.6%
1950-59	19.5	1.8	17.7	21.4	3.7	20.9%
1940-49	20.4	1.8	18.6	18.1	(0.5)	-2.7%
pre 1940	281.2	21.9	259.3	274.8	15.5	6.0%
Total	377.4	26.2	351.2	379.7	28.5	8.1%
All Occupied Units						
1960-69	125.0	1.1	123.9	139.2	15.3	12.3%
1950-59	109.7	1.8	107.9	105.6	(2.3)	-2.1%
1940-49	58.5	1.9	56.6	56.2	(0.4)	-0.7%
pre 1940	537.0	26.1	510.9	546.5	35.6	7.0%
Total	830.2	30.9	799.3	847.5	48.2	6.0%
Vacant Units						
1960-69	5.1	0.1	5.0	2.5	(2.5)	-50.0%
1950-59	2.7	0.2	2.5	4.8	2.3	92.0%
1940-49	2.4	0.6	1.8	3.4	1.6	88.9%
pre 1940	36.8	8.9	27.9	37.9	10.0	35.8%
Total	47.0	9.8	37.2	48.6	11.4	30.6%
All Housing Units						
1960-69	130.1	1.2	128.9	141.7	12.8	9.9%
1950-59	112.4	2.0	110.4	110.4	0.0	0.0%
1940-49	60.9	2.5	58.4	59.6	1.2	2.1%
pre 1940	573.8	35.0	538.8	584.4	45.6	8.5%
Total	877.2	40.7	836.5	896.1	59.6	7.1%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Annual Housing Survey, 1974 and 1981.

between 1973 and 1980.[3] The Boston SMSA contributed 10 percent of the Northeast's conversions, even though it contains less than 7 percent of the region's urban population. Table 2 also shows that the greatest increases in the number of units came from buildings constructed before 1940 and those built in the '60s. More than 45,000 units were added to buildings built before 1940, more than offsetting the 35,000 units lost from the older inventory.

City Trends: 1975-1985

The Boston Redevelopment Authority estimates that, as of June 1985, there are 250,000 dwelling units in the city of Boston, 8,700 more than in 1980. This increase would not have been possible without the contribution of conversion and rehabilitation activity. Over the last five years, new construction produced an average of 600 units per year, including many publicly subsidized units. Thus, if the BRA estimate is correct, conversion and rehabilitation activity accounted for well over half of the additions to the city's inventory over the last ten years.

According to a recent report by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (Avault, 1984), approximately 14,300 dwelling units were added to the city's inventory through major development projects between 1975 and 1984. Of that number, 44% were added through conversion of non-residential space, sub-division of existing dwellings, or rehabilitation of vacant, uninhabitable residential buildings (see Table 3). This estimate is undoubtedly low. These figures are based on an inventory of developments involving investment of at least $50,000. Illegal conversions, and conversion projects costing less than $50,000 are not covered by this estimate. Furthermore, nearly three quarters of the newly-built units were publicly subsidized: either because they were public housing developments or because they were developed under a Chapter 121A agreement with the city. Thus, most of the unsubsidized production of dwelling units in Boston comes from conversion activity rather than new construction. Table 3 shows that between 1980 and 1984

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3. This estimate was arrived at using an approach similar to the cohort survival method of demographic analysis. The number of housing units of a certain "vintage", rather than age groups in the population, are tracked over time. Table 2 shows the changing number of housing units in structures built before 1970. Once losses from the stock are netted out, the number of units of a certain vintage in 1974 can be compared to the number of units from that same vintage in 1981. Three out of four vintages showed an increase in the number of units; only structures built between 1950 and 1959 did not exhibit an increasing intensity of use between 1974 and 1981. This method does not capture conversions in buildings built after 1970.

TABLE 3
SOURCES OF BOSTON HOUSING SUPPLY
1975-1984

	NEW CONSTRUCTION	CONVERTED OR REHABILITATED DWELLINGS	TOTAL HOUSING PRODUCTION	REHABILITATION AND CONVERSION'S SHARE OF HOUSING PRODUCTION (by 5-year period)
	(dwelling units added)			
1975	849	309	1,158	1975-79
1976	1,636	171	1,807	----------
1977	1,341	0	1,341	22.9%
1978	861	417	1,278	
1979	474	637	1,111	
1980	290	971	1,261	1980-84
1981	976	680	1,656	----------
1982	90	924	1,014	61.5%
1983	1,307	874	2,181	
1984	282	1,254	1,536	
Total	8,106	6,237	14,343	1974-84

				43.5%

Based on major development projects ($50,000 or more) completed 1975-1982 or scheduled for completion 1983-84.

Source: John Avault, "Boston's Development, Economic, Fiscal, and Neighborhood Impacts", June 1984.

large conversion projects accounted for 61.5 percent of City housing production. This share would be even higher if smaller conversion jobs, including many illegal additions, were taken into account.

Increased housing demand stemming from demographic and life-style changes may have encouraged the city's reliance on conversions. Although the city's population dropped 12 percent over the last decade, a decline in the average size of a Boston household translated into an increased demand for independent dwelling units. The average household size in Boston fell from 2.9 persons in 1970 to 2.6 persons in 1980, due to the increasing number of one and two-person households. Mid-census estimates indicate that the number of persons per household has continued to fall, reaching 2.5 in 1985. All told, Boston has accomodated between 13,000 and 23,000 more households over the last five years.[4] Conversions represent an important way that the existing stock can be adapted to meet the needs of these smaller households.

The most recent population estimates for the city now show that population, as well as the number of households is increasing, putting stress on the housing supply from yet another direction. Projections by the Boston Redevelopment Authority indicate that annual population increases may be as high as 7,000 between 1985 and 1990; and the number of households may increase by between 2,000 and 5,000 a year. Under conditions such as these, conversions can be expected to continue to play an important role in the supply of additional dwelling units. Furthermore, converted units meet the demand for lower-priced rental housing in a way that the newly built units simply cannot accomplish without large public subsidies. As the availability of such subsidies becomes scarcer, conversions represent the largest supply of additional rental housing for low- and moderate-income residents.

One of the drawbacks to the information gathered by the BRA and presented in Table 3 is that it covers only large projects (minimum size of around $50,000) and those undertaken legally. The next section will present more information on smaller, legal conversion projects. The fourth section contains information on legal and illegal conversion activity in three neighborhoods, based on a survey of 603 Boston homeowners.

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4. Ann Haffrey, Gregory Perkins, Alexander Ganz, et. al., The Future of Boston's Poor (BRA Research Dept., July 1985).

III. LEGAL CONVERSION ACTIVITY IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

This section of the report contains an analysis of legal conversion activity in the city over the last eleven years. These legal conversions may represent only a tip of the entire conversion iceberg. Nevertheless, analysis of this "visible" portion, including the regulatory process and legal conversions, aids our understanding of the hidden portion: illegally added units.

The Conversion System

1. All legal conversions begin when a property owner applies in writing for a building permit from the Department of Inspectional Services.

2. A city building inspector determines whether the proposed work would result in a change in occupancy. Even if the applicant does not declare that an additional dwelling unit is part of the proposed work, the Building Inspector may still flag the application as constituting a potential change of occupancy. Requests to add a bathroom, a kitchen, or a second story entrance should tip off the inspector to undeclared changes in occupancy.

3. The zoning section of the Inspectional Services Department determines whether a proposed change in occupancy is a matter of right. This situation arises only in certain zoning districts where "the conversion of dwelling structures for more families" is an "allowed use" (under Section 8-7, (8) of the Boston Zoning Code). Even then, the project must meet that district's requirements for:

- lot area per dwelling unit,
- floor to area ratio,
- open space provisions per dwelling unit,
- off-street parking,
- height, setback and other design restrictions;

and, of course, all Boston building code requirements for residential structures. According to John Bell, of the BRA's zoning office, there are very few parts of the city where a dwelling unit may be added "by right" without violating one or more of these restrictions.

In theory, conversions are also allowed without a variance in areas zoned for apartments (H districts), some local or general business districts (L or B districts), and in a few "general residential" districts not zoned expressly for single family dwellings (R.8 districts). However, in practice, lots in R.8 districts are

rarely large enough to accomodate an increase in occupancy without violating the minimum lot size requirements of 2,000 square feet per dwelling unit. If the converter can show that he will meet one-half of the requirements for lot area, off-street parking and open space, then the addition of a dwelling unit may be accepted by the Board of Appeal as a "Conditional Use". Conditional use permits, like variances require a hearing before the Board of Appeal.

4. If the ISD denies a building permit, the prospective converter can file an appeal. An appeal costs $100 for owners of buildings that would contain three or fewer families after the conversion is completed. Property owners who would end up with more than three units in their building must pay $100 for each section of the Boston Zoning Code that the proposed conversion would violate.

5. Once the property owner has filed an appeal, the Board of Appeal schedules a public hearing, typically within 3-4 months. An advertisement of this hearing is placed in a local paper a week in advance. The property owner is instructed to meet with community organizations and abutters prior to this public hearing.

If the appeal is approved by the five-member Board, the property owner has two years to use the variance or conditional use permit. Approval requires an assenting vote by four-fifths of the Board. If the Board denies the request, the property owner must either wait a year or substantially alter the proposal before trying again. An unsuccessful appellant may also try to reverse the Board of Appeals' decision in the Boston Housing Court, a process that takes from three to five months.

Tracking Legal Conversion Activity

The Board of Appeal records can be used to measure the legal portion of conversion activity that takes place in the city. Table 4 summarizes four categories of cases heard by the Board of Appeal between 1974 and 1984:

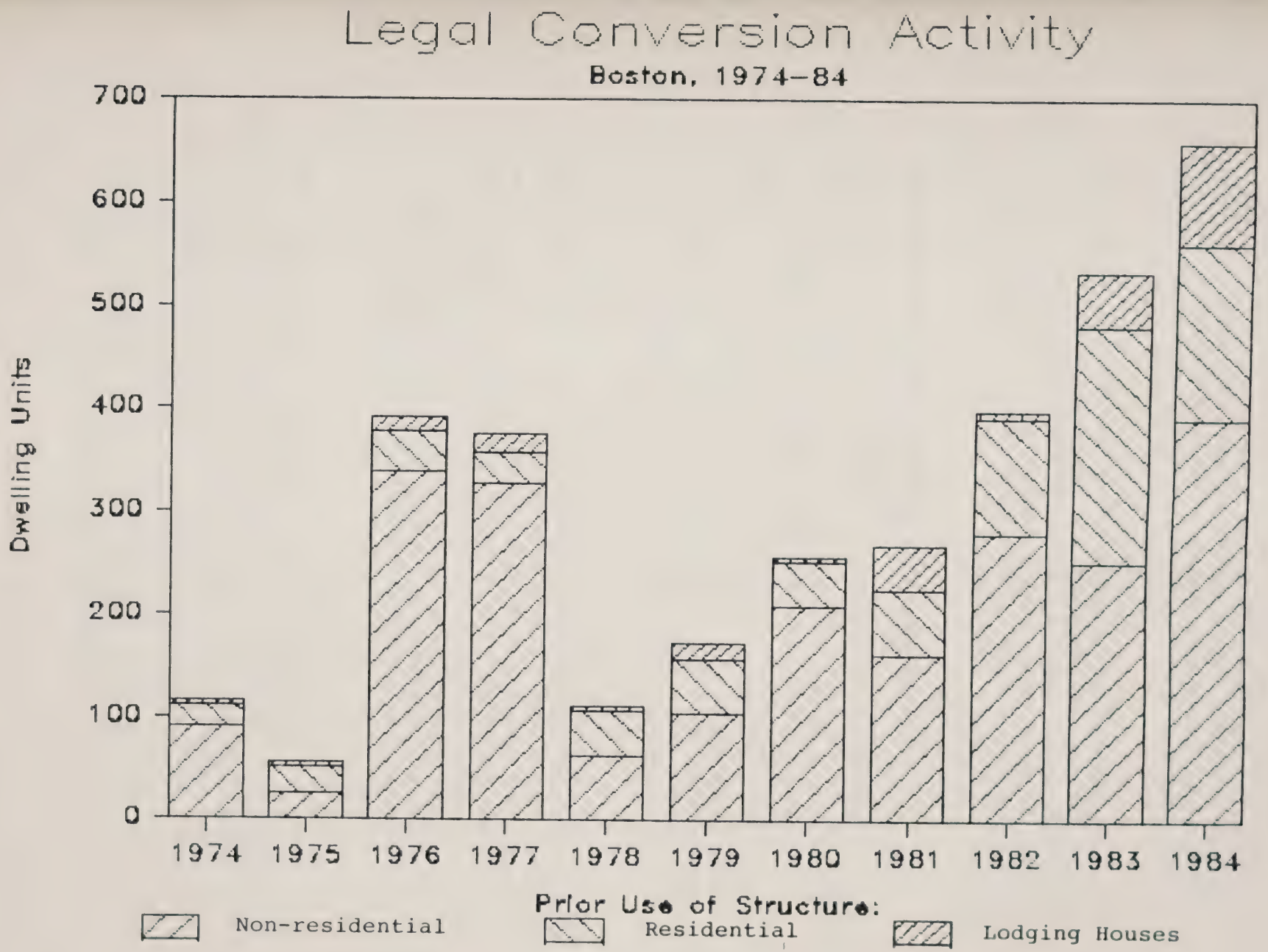
1. Conversions applied for and approved for three categories of buildings:
   - Conversion of residential property
   - Conversion of non-residential property
   - Conversion of rooming houses from transient to permanent housing
2. Changes of occupancy resulting in a loss of housing units
3. Legalization of a conversion that has already taken place
4. Conversions applied for and denied

The high cost of filing an appeal, both in terms of time and money, assures that a very high percentage of appellants receiving

TABLE 4
Legal Conversion Activity
In Boston 1974-1984

	Use Prior to Conversion:									Other Cases Heard by Board of Appeal:					
	Residential		Non-Residential		Lodging Houses		Total Additions			Losses		Legalized Existing Use		Variance Denied	
Year	units added	cases	units added	cases	units added	cases	units added	cases		units lost	cases	units legalized	cases	units denied	cases
1974	21	13	90	5	5	1	116	19		-11	7	2	1	24	12
1975	25	23	27	5	3	2	55	30		-10	6	9	7	32	7
1976	40	17	339	7	14	3	393	27		-66	10	10	6	35	8
1977	30	20	329	9	18	3	377	32		-23	8	18	11	14	7
1978	44	28	63	6	3	1	110	35		-23	12	8	6	2	2
1979	52	30	104	8	17	2	173	40		-28	5	6	5	18	12
1980	43	36	210	12	5	2	258	50		-15	8	16	9	47	20
1981	64	47	161	17	43	7	268	71		-28	8	52	13	169	22
1982	113	42	280	14	5	2	398	58		-263	16	51	22	28	11
1983	229	53	253	14	52	9	534	76		-10	7	191	46	96	20
1984	169	130	392	15	98	16	659	161		-33	13	208	40	78	14
TOTAL	830	439	2248	112	263	48	3341	599		-510	100	571	166	543	135

Source: City of Boston, Board of Appeal Records, 1974-1984
This table is based on an analysis of applications for variances and conditional use permits heard by the Board of Appeal.


Legal Conversion Activity
Boston, 1974–84
Dwelling Units
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
1974
1975
1976
1977
1978
1979
1980
1981
1982
1983
1984
Prior Use of Structure:
Non-residential
Residential
Lodging Houses

approval from the Board of Appeal do undertake a conversion. Many cases heard by the Board of Appeal involve requests for the addition or subtraction of more than one dwelling unit. Thus, from 1974 to 1984, 3,341 units were added through the approval of 600 cases; nearly three-quarters of these cases involved buildings already in residential use, 18 percent concerned non-residential buildings converted to residential use, and the remaining 8 percent of the cases dealt with lodging houses.

The number of dwelling units created by conversion activity reached an all-time high (over the eleven-year period for which records were available) of 659 units in 1984. A preliminary analysis of 1985 variances revealed that the level of conversion activity may be even higher this year. Figure 1 charts the rapid increase of conversion activity in the City of Boston between 1974 and 1984.

Residential vs Non-Residential Conversions

The conversion of residential buildings is more widespread in terms of location and the number of buildings affected. However, the conversion of commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings has contributed a greater number of dwelling units in a few, concentrated locations. This contribution of 2,248 units between 1974 and 1978 is 2.7 times greater than the 830 units created through the legal conversion of residential buildings. Even with generous assumpt+ions about the amount of illegal conversion activity taking place in residential structures, the conversion of non-residential buildings undoubtedly adds more dwelling units each year to the City's inventory.

Table 4 shows that, even though non-residential buildings yield more dwelling units, many more residential buildings are converted each year. According to the Planning Board records, 112 non-residential structures were converted between 1974 and 1984, resulting in an average increase of twenty dwelling units per property. By contrast, the owners of 439 houses and apartment buildings went through the process of getting a variance in order to add less than two dwelling units, on average, to each property. (Note: This count does not include those who may have been able to add a dwelling unit "by right" or those who added one or more units illegally.)

There are other fundamental differences between these two types of conversions. The conversion of large non-residential structures, such as abandoned schools, factories or warehouses, is a highly visible source of upper-income housing in many parts of the city. (e.g. the Charlestown Navy Yard, warehouses on the downtown waterfront and along Fort Point Channel, and Dorchester Lower Mills). These projects are typically so large that the developers could not avoid going through the proper legal channels to get their permits. Consequently, the city is more likely to reassess these buildings to reflect the new occupancy.

The conversion of residential buildings, on the other hand, is less visible and less likely to be undertaken within the regulatory process. Residential buildings can often be converted relatively cheaply by the owner without the heavy investment needed to convert industrial space or institutional buildings, such as churches or schools. The survey of converted properties in Boston shows that these lower costs are frequently, though not always, passed along to the tenant in the form of lower rents.

One of the most striking findings that emerges from the analysis of the Board of Appeal records is that the caseload of property owners seeking permission to add dwelling units has increased dramatically since 1974. Between 1974 and 1979, about seven non-residential properties and 22 residential buildings qualified for variances or conditional use permits each year. This annual caseload has now more than doubled: approximately 14 non-residential conversion projects and 62 residential projects were approved, on average, between 1980 and 1984. Along with the rapid rise in the number of other cases that come before the Planning Board, the regulatory system is now unquestionably strained to its limits. The weekly hearings before the Planning Board, formerly completed in three to four hours, now frequently stretch out into day-long sessions.

The number of dwellings created by non-residential conversions hit an all-time high of 392 units in 1984. The number of units added through the conversion of non-residential buildings exceeded 300 twice before -- in 1976 and 1977 when several large warehouses were converted to condominiums on the waterfront.

The increase in the amount of legal residential conversion activity is even more dramatic. From 1974 to 1979 the average number of units added was 35. Between 1980 and 1984 the average increase was 124 units and the peak was 229 units added in 1983.

Lodging House Conversions

The third category, conversions of lodging houses, does not necessarily represent an increase in the city's capacity to house low income and elderly citizens. Although 263 permanent dwelling units have been created through the conversion of 48 lodging houses, even more rooms for transients may have been lost.

About a third of these properties were listed as vacant at the time the appeal was filed, but there is no way to tell how long the property had been vacant. In some cases, the owner could have evicted the residents in anticipation of getting permission from the Board of Appeal to convert the structure into apartments or condominiums. In other cases, the conversion work could have accompanied the rehabilitation of a long-vacant property. Unfortunately there is no way to distinguish between these two different situations. Moreover, because many rooming houses are not legally licensed, the Building Inspector had no way of knowing if some

applicants were proposing to convert a structure that contained rooms for transients.

An examination of the Board of Appeal records for the 1974-1984 period revealed that six variances were approved for the creation of lodging houses and an equal number were denied. The net result was that at least 48 lodging houses have been converted to permanent living quarters since 1974. (Additional lodging houses, not identified as such by the Planning Board records, might also have been converted to permanent quarters.) The resultant loss of anywhere from 300 to 500 rooms for transients is not mitigated by the creation of 263 permanent dwelling units. After the large investments used to convert these lodging houses, developers usually set rents well beyond the reach of the former lodgers.

Almost all the lodging houses identified through the analysis of the Board of Appeal records were located in the South End. Only one or two lodging houses were converted each year until 1981 when seven such properties were converted. Then in 1984, 16 lodging houses were converted. If this trend continues, the supply of rooms for single elderly and lower-income individuals who rely on this type of accomodation will be seriously threatened.

Neighborhood Analysis

Table 5 shows legal conversion activity between 1974 and 1984 broken down by neighborhood. Approximately half of the conversion projects approved by the Board of Appeal were in Central Boston -- including Back Bay, Beacon Hill, the North End, the South End, and Chinatown. More than twice as many dwelling units were approved for Central Boston than for Dorchester/Mattapan, the neighborhood with the next-highest total. However, Dorchester/Mattapan had the greatest number of units "legalized," that is, variances approved for an existing illegal occupancy.

These "legalized" units constitute an imperfect measure of the amount of illegal conversion activity going on in a neighborhood. A high number of these cases indicates that property owners added dwelling units illegally at some point in the past and the present owners want to legalize the property, often right before a sale. Legalization of an income-producing rental unit often raises the price that a property can bring to a seller and raises the amount that financial institutions are willing to lend to prospective purchasers. Thus, the number of legalized units may be indicative of past, rather than present, conversion projects and may be more closely linked to high turnover rates than to illegal conversion activity.

After Central Boston and Dorchester, two of the neighborhoods selected for the survey had the highest number of legalized units over the last ten years: 261 units in Jamaica Plain and 170 units in Allston-Brighton were approved. South Boston (138) and Charlestown (137) had the next-highest totals of units added legally. Central Boston also contained the greatest number of proposed con-

TABLE 5
Legal Conversions in the City of Boston
By Neighborhood
1974-1984

	GAINED	LOST	LEGALIZED	DENIED
	(dwelling units)			
Allston-Brighton	170	143	15	55
Central Boston	1,614	200	114	253
Charlestown	137	18	49	5
Dorchester/Mattapan	793	21	158	18
East Boston	75	6	20	27
Hyde Park/Roslindale/W. Roxbury	67	5	16	34
Jamaica Plain	261	7	26	88
Roxbury	30	53	4	7
South Boston	138	6	49	53
TOTAL	3,285	459	451	540

Note: Totals less than in Tables 4 and 6 because the exact location of several converted buildings was not available.

Source: This table is based on analysis of variances and conditional use permits. Records of the City of Boston, Board of Appeal 1974-84. Neighborhood definitions are based on zip code.

version projects (representing 253 units) turned down by the Board of Appeal; Jamaica Plain was a distant second with 88 units denied.

Table 6 contains a more detailed breakdown of the status of buildings prior to conversion. Converted factories and warehouses contributed 1,205 units between 1974 and 1984, more than a third of all the units added by legal conversion activity over this period. Another third of the total units added came from a combination of commercial structures (471 units), including office and retail buildings, school buildings (393), and an assortment of other institutional buildings such as nursing homes or churches (169 units).

Residential buildings contributed the remaining third of the units added by legal conversions. These additions to residential buildings, which Table 4 showed to be the most rapidly growing component of legal conversion activity, were spread among a wide variety of structure types. Structures with six or more units prior to converson were the source of the largest number of units legally added to residential structures (268), followed by lodging houses (263) and single-family dwellings (212). In addition, 144 units were added to two-family structures, 128 units to three-family buildings, and 78 units were added to four- and five-family dwellings. In terms of the type of structures most frequently converted, single-family and two-family dwellings topped the list with 114 and 88 structures, respectively. Almost two units, on average, were added to each of the converted single-family structures, while an average of 1.6 units were added to each two-family building.

TABLE 6

Legal Conversions in Boston
By Property Type: 1974-1984

PRIOR USE	UNITS ADDED	NUMBER OF BUILDINGS	AVERAGE NUMBER OF UNITS ADDED PER BUILDING
Non-Residential Conversions	2,248	112	20.1
Commercial	471	47	10.0
Manufacturing	1,205	26	46.3
Schools	393	15	26.2
Other Institutional	169	18	9.4
Other Non-residential	10	6	1.7
Residential Conversions	1,093	403	2.7
Single-Family	212	114	1.9
Two-Family	144	88	1.6
Three-Family	128	71	1.8
Four- to Five-Family	78	50	1.6
Six or More Units	268	44	6.1
Lodging Houses	263	36	7.3
TOTAL UNITS ADDED	3,341	515	6.5

Source: This table is based on analysis of variances and conditional use permits. Records of the City of Boston, Board of Appeal 1974-84.

IV. CONVERSION ACTIVITY IN THREE NEIGHBORHOODS

The analysis in this section is based on a survey of approximately 600 Boston homeowners. Residents of owner-occupied dwellings were interviewed in order to determine the role of conversion activity in smaller, residential buildings -- which, as the previous chapter showed, is the fastest-growing source of converted units in the city. Three neighborhoods were selected for the study, all of which were known to have experienced a high level of conversion activity in recent years. A fourth, "legal over-sample" group was targeted in an attempt to interview legal converters. (The methodology used in selecting and interviewing the respondents is described in Appendix A.) The survey's purpose was threefold:

1) To go beyond the Board of Appeal records by attempting to get information about illegal conversion activity. This was accomplished by finding out how many units had been added without building permits or variances.

2) To shed light on the role of conversion activity as a source of affordable rental housing. This was accomplished through a series of questions designed to find out about the residents of converted units, the rents they pay, and the costs to the owners of converting.

3) To discover the attitudes of Boston residents to conversion activity in their neighborhoods. A series of questions was asked to determine: whether respondents were aware of conversions on their street; if they were aware, the effect they thought these extra units had on their neighborhood; and whether they ever considered adding a unit to their own homes.

Overall Findings

- 8.1 percent (41 out of 505) randomly-sampled homeowners had already added or were in the process of adding, an independent dwelling unit to their property.

- Another 26 homeowners in the legal over-sample, had added or were in the process of adding one or more units, bringing the total number of converters interviewed for the study to 68.

- 61 of these 68 had completed the conversion work. This group had added a total of 92 units:

- 64 percent added one unit
- 22 percent added two units
- 14 percent added three or more units

o 3.2 percent of those interviewed (16 of 505) reduced the number of dwelling units at some time after purchasing their property. A total of 29 units were removed by these 16 homeowners.

o Of those that did not convert, 10.6 percent (49 of 462) have considered adding a dwelling unit to their property.

o Among non-converters, the most commonly mentioned reasons for wanting to add a unit were

1. 57 percent: Wanted rental income (28 of 49)
2. 20 percent: Wanted to put unused space to good use (10 of 49)
3. 16 percent: Wanted to provide housing for a friend or relative (8 of 49)

o Among non-converters who wanted to add a unit, more than half (23) still hoped to carry out their plan. The most commonly mentioned reasons for not carrying out their plans were

1. 45 percent: Couldn't afford to do the work (22 of 49)
2. 14 percent: Liked house the way it was (7 of 49)
3. 12 percent: Too much "red-tape" involved (6 of 49)

o Among all non-converters interviewed in the random sample, 25 percent were aware of conversion activity in their neighborhoods (116 out of 458).

o Awareness of conversion activity was highest in the South End, where more than half of those interviewed knew of apartments that had been added to buildings on their street. In Jamaica Plain and Allston-Brighton, about one-fifth of the respondents were aware of conversion activity on their street (Jamaica Plain, 21.4 percent; Allston-Brighton, 20.8 percent).

o If aware of conversions on their street, respondents were asked what overall effect they thought these additional units had on the neighborhood:

- 28 percent reported a positive effect
- 36 percent reported a negative effect
- 27 percent found no effect
- 6 percent reported a "mixed" effect overall
- 3 percent said "don't know"
  (N=116)

o When asked to name the positive effects, the most common responses were

- 47 percent: Provided affordable housing
- 47 percent: Upgraded neighborhood buildings
- 34 percent: Brought in good neighbors
- 22 percent: Raised Property values
  (N=32)

o When asked to name the negative effects, the most common responses were

- 74 percent: Traffic or parking problems
- 45 percent: Unwanted influx of "transients," "students" or "people who don't care about the neighborhood."
- 33 percent: Excessive density.
- 17 percent: More noise
  (N=42)

Characteristics of Units Added to Owner-Occupied Buildings

o The overwhelming majority of added units were rented; less than 5 percent (2 of 61) were sold as condominiums.

o The most common method for adding a unit was to subdivide an existing residence:

Method Used to Add Unit(s)

- 49 percent subdivided residence (not including attic or basement)
- 25 percent converted basement
- 16 percent converted attic
- 8 percent converted rooming houses
- 2 percent converted garage

100 % (N=61)

o The most common type of unit added, by far, was a one-bedroom apartment:

Type of Unit Added

- 49 percent added one-bedroom unit(s)
- 28 percent added two-bedroom unit(s)
- 25 percent added studio apartment(s)
- 13 percent added three-bedroom unit(s)

Total greater than 100 % because some converters added more than one type of unit. (N=61)

o Although three-quarters of the units added had entrances visible from the street, half of the converters reported that at least one of the new units shared an outside entrance with the main unit:

- 66 percent: Separate entrance from street
- 51 percent: Shares entrance with main unit

Total greater than 100 % because some converters added more than one unit. (N=61)

o In a finding consistent with the observations of the converters' neighbors who complain about parking problems, only 13 percent (8 of 61) of those who added units provide off-street parking for the new occupants.

o The median rent for all units added was $500 per month. The range went from no cash rent paid (4 percent of the units added) to $1200 per month. Of those who paid a cash rent, the average amount was $527 per month. All of the units where no cash rent was collected were occupied by relatives of the converter.

o Just under 10 percent of the converters rent the new apartments furnished or partially furnished. Heat is included in 48 percent of the rentals and electricity is included in 25 percent. (N=61)

o Almost all of the added apartments were in older structures with three to five stories:

- 48 percent in three-story buildings
- 33 percent in four story buildings
- 17 percent in five-story buildings
- 2 percent in seven-story buildings

(N=54)

- 74 percent in structures built before 1900
- 22 percent in structures built between 1900 and 1940
- 4 percent in structures built after 1940 (N=50)

Type of Work Done and Financing

o The most frequently mentioned major task undertaken in conjunction with the conversion work was the addition of a kitchen (69 percent of the conversions). The most frequently mentioned minor task was interior painting (80 percent of the conversions).

Major Tasks Mentioned

- 69 percent added kitchen
- 61 percent added electrical wiring
- 61 percent added bathroom
- 61 percent repaired or replaced ceiling
- 59 percent repaired or replaced windows or doorways
- 57 percent repaired or replaced walls
- 56 percent added plumbing
- 56 percent added wall(s)
- 52 percent added windows or doorways
- 49 percent added water heater
- 49 percent repaired or replaced floors
- 49 percent repaired or replaced plumbing
- 48 percent repaired or replaced roof
- 46 percent repaired or replaced bathrooms
- 44 percent repaired or replaced electrical wiring
- 44 percent added furnace or heating system (N=56)

Minor Tasks Mentioned

- 80 percent: Interior painting
- 69 percent: Interior plaster work
- 51 percent: Exterior painting
- 51 percent: Landscaping
- 46 percent: Exterior siding or masonry repair (N=56)

o When asked who accomplished all these tasks, 64 percent of the converters reported that they or their families did at least some of the work themselves. When asked who did most of the work in performing these improvements, "general contractors" was the most frequent response.

Who did most of the work?

- 42 percent: General contractor
- 36 percent: Self or family
- 16 percent: Subcontractors
- 4 percent: Friends

(N=54)

o The median amount spent by a converter to add one or more units was $30,000. The range was from $1,000 to $275,000. The average amount spent was $52,273.

o Sixty-three percent of the converters (29 of 46) reported that they financed the conversion work with a loan. Of those who borrowed, the most frequently mentioned types of loans were second mortgages (48 percent) and loans from relatives (21 percent). (N=29) Converters were evenly split between those who used a commercial bank (44 percent) and those who used a savings and loan institution (44 percent) for financing the conversion work. Only 14 percent of the converters said that they had used a government-subsidized program to help them finance their conversion expenditures. Other institutions mentioned included mortgage companies (11 percent) and credit unions (11 percent). (N=36) Totals are greater than 100% because some converters used more than one source of financing.

Characteristics of Converters and Non-Converters

o Most converters had been at their current address for more than five years (72 percent) and a surprisingly high percentage (21 percent) had lived more than 25 years in their current residences. However, converters moved in more recently on average than the rest of the homeowners interviewed for the study; 51 percent of converters took up residence in the last ten years, while only 41 percent of non-converters had done so.

Years in Current Residence	Converters	Non-Converters
0-5	28.3%	19.5%
6-10	22.6	21.8
11-15	17.0	12.1
16-25	11.3	21.5
25+	20.8	25.1
	100% (N=53)	100% (N=455)

- Converters were less likely than non-converting homeowners to be living in the first house they had ever purchased (63 vs. 77 percent), although they did tend to be slightly younger than the rest of the sample. Converters were also more likely to be in their 30s or 40s, while non-converters were more likely to be older than 50 or younger than 30.

Age	Converters	Non-Converters
20s	9.4%	11.6%
30s	32.1	27.4
40s	30.2	19.3
50s	11.3	15.4
60+	17.0	26.3
	100%	100%
	(N=53)	(N=456)

- Although converters had much higher incomes than non-converters, they were just as likely to belong to a minority group: 43 percent of converters had incomes of $40,000 or more, compared to 27 percent of other homeowners surveyed. Hispanics constituted about 5 percent of both groups, blacks made up only 5 percent of non-converting homeowners while 11 percent of the converters were black.

Income	Converters	Non-Converters
< $10,000	6.1%	13.6%
$10,000-$19,999	22.4	18.9
$20,000-$29,999	18.4	22.4
$30,000-$39,999	10.2	17.9
$40,000-$49,999	16.3	10.5
$50,000+	26.5	16.6
	100%	100%
	(N=49)	(N=449)

Ethnic Group	Converters	Non-Converters
White	83.0%	84.2%
Black	11.3	5.1
Hispanic	5.7	4.7
Asian	0.0	6.0
Other	0.0	0.0
	100%	100%
	(N=53)	(N=449)

- Converters were more frequently single, divorced, or separated (59 percent) compared to the rest of the random sample (42 percent).

Marital Status	Converters	Non-Converters
Single (never married or widowed)	45.3%	35.4%
Divorced or separated	13.2	6.6
Married	41.5	58.0
	100%	100%
	(N=53)	(N=457)

- Converters were only slightly less likely to have children under the age of 18 living with them -- 26 percent vs. 31 percent of non-converting homeowners.

Characteristics of the Occupants of Units Added

- Nearly 39 percent of the converters reported that the unit they added was inhabited by only one occupant. However, an average of 2.6 people were housed in each converted property, sometimes in more than one unit.

Number of People Living in Units Added to Property	
1	39%
2	17
3	14
4-5	21
6 or more	10
	100%
	(N=52)

- A total of 136 people were reported to be living in the 52 converted properties for which occupancy information could be obtained from respondents. Of that number, at least 6 percent were over 60 years old and 4 percent were under the age of 16.

- When asked about the age of the adults in the units they added, converters reported that most occupants were in their 20s or 30s:

Converters' Estimate of Occupants' Age	
College age	4%
20s or 30s	67
40s or 50s	15
60 or older	6
Mixture of ages	6
Don't know	2
	100%
	(N=52)

- Nineteen percent of the occupants of units added through conversion activity were relatives of the converter or his family. Sons, daughters, and siblings were the most frequently mentioned relatives. Parents, aunts, uncles and cousins were also reported as occupants.

- Minorities were more heavily represented as occupants of added units than they were in the rest of the sample: 12 percent of the tenants of added units were black, 4 percent were Hispanic, and 12 percent of the households were described as a mixture of more than one ethnic group.

Illegal Conversions

The survey results show that there were two types of illegally added units. The first type were homeowners who added independent dwellings to their property without obtaining a building permit. The second, and more common situation, involved homeowners who claimed to have taken out building permits but did not obtain a variance. While only 7 percent of the converters reported that they had not taken out a building permit, 46 percent said they never obtained a variance. When asked why they did not obtain a variance, an overwhelming majority of those answering thought that a variance was not required.

As pointed out in the previous chapter, there are instances when an owner can legally add a dwelling unit without a variance, most notably in districts zoned for apartments. However, all condominiums and apartments were screened out during the sample selection process through the use of 1985 assessment records. Furthermore, according to BRA zoning officials, it is virtually impossible to add a rental unit to an owner-occupied dwelling legally anywhere in Allston-Brighton or Jamaica Plain without a variance. Yet, 32 percent of the converters who did not obtain variances lived in these two neighborhoods.

The remaining 68 percent of the conversions undertaken without variances were in the South End. Some of these South End properties may have been in "H" districts, where dwelling units could be added "by right" if all other zoning requirements for open space, parking, density and F.A.R. (floor area to lot size ratio) are met. However, most of the South End is composed of H-1 or H-2 districts, which carry stringent lot-size requirements for each dwelling unit added. In the few areas in the South End zoned for an F.A.R. of 3.0 or more (H-3, H-4, etc.) buildings are allowed to reach a maximum height of sixty-five feet, and such areas are consequently dominated by large apartment buildings. However, only two of the fifteen South End conversions without variances were in buildings that contained more than five units. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that many of the "no-variance" converters were entitled to an increase in the number of units in their building without a hearing before the Board of Appeal.

In conclusion, it cannot be stated with complete certainty that all of the 22 converters who did not obtain a variance added one or more units illegally. Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that all four of the respondents that did not obtain building permits and nearly all of those who did not get variances acted illegally. To give these converters the benefit of the doubt, many may have acted illegally out of ignorance; 91 percent (20 of 22) stated that "a variance was not required" when asked why they did not get one before adding one or more units.

Conversion Activity and the Regulatory Process

- When asked why they obtained a building permit before starting to add one or more units to their property, 76 percent of the converters gave the obvious answer that it was required by law. However, a variety of other reasons were also mentioned, including:
  - 7 percent: Obtained a permit because contractor would not work without one
  - 5 percent: Contractor took care of getting the permits (N=49)
- When asked why they obtained a variance, 89 percent gave the same reason, that it was required, but other reasons mentioned included:
  - Wanted to protect my rights as a landlord
  - Needed the variance to qualify for a loan
- The median amount of time before approval of a variance by the Board of Appeal was three months; the range went from one to twelve months; and the

average length of time was 3.4 months. One quarter of the converters reported that they had difficulty getting a variance from the Board of Appeal.

- o Only half of the converters said that they discussed their plans with their neighbors (27 of 54). Of those that talked to their neighbors, only 7 percent (2 of 27) reported that any objections were raised to the added units.

Converters' Reasons for Adding One or More Units

- o The reasons converters gave for adding a unit were very similar to the reasons why some non-converters had considered adding a unit. When asked the open-ended question, "What were your principal reasons for adding a unit?" converters gave the following responses:

  - 51 percent: Wanted the rental income for unspecified uses
  - 23 percent: Wanted to get better use out of unused space
  - 7 percent: Wanted to provide a place for a friend or relative

  (N=59)

- o When read a list of reasons why people might want to add a unit to their property, converters responded in the following manner:

Major Factor	Minor Factor	Not A Factor	
60%	18%	22%	Needed rental income to help cover mortgage payments
43	26	31	Needed rental income to help cover maintenance costs
36	29	36	Wanted to increase resale value of home
34	32	34	Wanted to get tax benefits from owning rental property
24	25	51	Wanted to provide affordable housing for friend/relative
19	29	52	Needed rental income for other uses
15	35	50	Wanted a tenant to help look after my property

(N=59)

Findings in Three Neighborhoods

The South End had the highest percentage of converted properties by a large margin. While 27 percent (25 of 67) of homeowners in this neighborhood reported that they had added a unit after acquiring their property, only 4 percent (8 of 207) in Jamaica Plain and 1.2 percent (3 of 195) in Allston-Brighton had done so. The other converters interviewed for this study were selected by using Board of Appeal records to establish a legal "oversample" group.[5]

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5. Many of the homeowners selected for the legal oversample had converted properties in one of the three study neighborhoods, but because they were not randomly selected they have not been included in the neighborhood findings listed above.

South End

- Converters in the South End spent more on their properties than did the other converters interviewed in this study; 56 percent spent more than $40,000 to add one or more units, compared with 46 percent of thelegal oversample converters and 38 percent of the Jamaica Plain converters.

- South End converters were also much more likely to take out a loan to finance the conversion work; 64 percent of them did so, compared with 38 percent of the legal oversample group and 25 percent of the Jamaica Plain converters.

- Because of the high density of development there, it is not surprising that converters in the South End were least likely to provide off-street parking for the occupants. In fact, only 8 percent did so.

- Non-converters in the South End were more than twice as likely to be aware of conversion activity on their street.

- South End non-converters were also more than twice as likely to view the effects of conversion activity in a positive light: 48 percent of South Enders who were aware of conversion activity reported that it had a positive effect in their neighborhood. Only 19 percent of those aware of conversion activity in Jamaica Plain or Allston-Brighton said that they thought it had a positive effect.

- The most frequently cited positive effects in the South End were that conversion activity had upgraded buildings in the neighborhood (53 percent), brought good neighbors (32 percent), provided affordable housing (32 percent), and raised property values (32 percent). (N=19)

- The South End was the only neighborhood where displacement was raised as a negative effect of conversion activity. In fact, displacement of renters was the most frequently cited negative effect of conversion activity (55 percent). (N=11)

- The second most frequently cited negative effect was that conversion activity brought in transients or others not committed to the neighborhood. Unlike the other two neighborhoods, parking was rarely mentioned as a negative reason.

Jamaica Plain

- Sixty-three percent of the converters in Jamaica Plain said that meeting their mortgage payments was a major factor in their decision to add a unit, compared with only 50 percent citing this reason as a major factor in the South End.

- Jamaica Plain converters were less likely than either South End or oversample converters to cite "tax benefits" as a major factor in their decision to convert (20 percent in JP vs. 33 percent in the South end and 43 percent in the legal oversample).

- Jamaica Plain converters were more likely to report that they did most of the conversion work themselves. When asked, "Who did the most work in terms of hours spent?" sixty-three percent of the JP converters, 28 percent of those in the South End, and 33 percent of the legal oversample group answered "self and other family members."

- Rents in the units added in Jamaica Plain were also lower than those added in the South End or in the legal oversample: 88 percent of the units added in JP rented for less than $600 vs. 68 percent in the South End and 58 percent of the legal oversample conversions.

- Converters in Jamaica Plain were less likely to take out a building permit but more likely to obtain a variance than converters in the South End. Needless to say, converters in both of these neighborhoods were less likely to follow these regulatory procedures than the legal oversample group.

- Jamaica Plain converters were more likely to add a unit by subdividing their residence (63 percent) than by converting a basement or an attic. Basement conversions were most common in the South End, where 48 percent of the converters reported that they had added a unit in this fashion.

- There were few differences between neighborhoods in terms of the types of tasks carried out in conjunction with the conversion work. Converters in Jamaica Plain were slightly less inclined to add, repair, or replace water heaters, furnaces, or siding when adding a unit.

Note: The above findings were based on the following number of interviews with converters:

South End N=25
Jamaica Plain N=8
Legal Oversample N=25

The interviews conducted with Allston-Brighton converters were not discussed because of the small sample size, N=3. The following findings are based on interviews with non-converting homeowners in Allston-Brighton.

Allston-Brighton

o Residents of Allston-Brighton (AB) were just as aware of conversion activity in their neighborhoods as Jamaica Plain residents. Yet fewer Allston-Brighton converters turned up in the random sample. (See Methodology in Appendix A.)

o Residents of Allston-Brighton were also less likely to report that they had ever considered adding a unit to their homes: 9 percent in AB, 14 percent in the South End, and 11 percent in JP wanted to add a separate dwelling unit. (N=195, 67, 207)

o Allston-Brighton residents were much more likely to feel that conversion activity had a negative effect on their neighborhood than either South End or JP homeowners. Sixty-three of those aware of conversion activity in AB thought it had a negative effect on the neighborhood, while only 24 percent of the respondents in the South End and 21 percent of those in Jamaica Plain expressed this negative view of conversion activity in their neighborhood. (N=40, 33, 43)

o The two negative effects most frequently cited by Allston-Brighton residents were that the extra units led to parking and traffic congestion (74 percent) and an influx of students or others not committed to the neighborhood (33 percent). (N=27)

o Allston-Brighton respondents tended to have lived much longer at their current addresses than those interviewed in the other two neighborhoods: 61 percent had lived 16 years or more in their houses, compared to 38 percent in the South End and 36 percent in Jamaica Plain. (N=186, 65, 202)

o Allston-Brighton respondents were also less well-off than homeowners in the other two neighborhoods:

61 percent earned less than $30,000 a year, compared with 53 percent in Jamaica Plain and 45 percent in the South End. (N=149, 171, 58)

- Finally, Allston-Brighton respondents were older than those interviewed in the South End or Jamaica Plain: 50 percent of the homeowners in AB were aged 50 or older, while only 39 percent of the respondents in JP and 28 percent of those in the South End were over 50. (N=185, 205, 64)

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through an analysis of Board of Appeal records and a survey of 600 Boston homeowners, this study has demonstrated the importance of conversion activity throughout the City of Boston. The Board of Appeal data show that the conversion of non-residential buildings and existing residential structures now contributes more rental units each year than new construction. These data also reveal that, even though the Central Boston neighborhoods produce the most converted units, conversion activity is going on in every neighborhood across the city.

The survey of Boston homeowners confirms that many residents of the South End, Jamaica Plain and Allston-Brighton are aware of conversion activity on their streets. The reaction of the neighbors of converted structures is mixed. Some say they feel that conversion activity has improved their neighborhoods, while others are vehemently opposed to it. The survey also confirmed that many homeowners do not follow the correct regulatory procedures before adding one or more rental units to their buildings. Fifty-three percent of the randomly sampled converters did not obtain a variance when they added a unit to their homes. If the proportion of homeowners who add units without variances is about the same in the rest of the city as in the three neighborhoods surveyed, then the Board of Appeal records understate the number of units added to residential structures by approximately half. Thus, the number of units added to residential structures between 1974 and 1984 may have been closer to 2,000 than to 1,093, the number of units for which variances were obtained.

The converters interviewed for this study were drawn from residential neighborhoods, so a similar estimate of the degree to which Board of Appeal records understate the conversion of non-residential structures cannot be made. For reasons discussed earlier, the rate of illegal conversions is probably much lower in non-residential structures.

Recommendations

1. The regulatory process set up to review applications for conversion projects needs to be streamlined and improved. The following problems need to be addressed:

   - Survey results indicate that inspectors do not flag conversions; building permits are issued but variances are not obtained.

   - Confusion at hearings: long delays and interruptions occur frequently; meetings with community groups and abutters are rarely accomplished <u>before</u> the hearing.

- Continuances (when an appellant asks that his case be heard at a later date) are freely granted, which annoys interested parties who have taken the time to show up at the hearing.

- Political grounds for decisions: presence of politically powerful advocates carries more weight than the BRA's recommendation.

- Lawyers help some applicants get their variances; those who are not represented by a lawyer are much less likely to get their conversion projects approved.

- An increase in the case load has led to overworked building inspectors, BRA zoning staff, and Board of Appeal members.

At present, cases are heard by the Board of Appeal in a haphazard fashion. Hearings for homeowners trying to add apartments or front porches are scheduled alongside hearings for major downtown office developments. A separate hearing process should be set up to deal with residential cases, including conversions, in a consistent and efficient manner.

Special zoning districts should be established where conversions could take place without a hearing before the Board of Appeal. Maximum density levels and off-street parking requirements could be used to regulate the number of conversions allowed "by right" in these areas.

2. The proliferation of illegally added units should be stopped. Properties containing such units represent a fiscal drain to the city, and lack of enforcement makes it difficult to insure that conversion activity does not disrupt a neighborhood. A comparison of the City's tax assessment records with the number of units reported by respondents to be on their property turned up many discrepancies. These discrepancies were particularly prevalent among converted properties: 31 out of 61 converted properties were assessed for fewer units than their owners said they contained. The Assessor's Office should update its records whenever a conversion takes place. The Board of Appeal should notify the City Assessor whenever it approves the addition of a rental unit to an existing building.

3. The City should adopt a coherent policy toward conversion activity. This policy should acknowledge the link between conversions and the supply of affordable rental housing. It should also encourage the addition of rental units in owner-occupied dwellings in neighborhoods, such as the South End, where community support is evident. Conversion activity should not be encouraged where the introduction of more rental units would prove disruptive to current residents.

   As part of this policy, the City should consider adopting an ordinance that would allow conversion activity with the issuance of a special building permit. The requirement of a variance could be waived for rental units in owner-occupied dwellings as long as off-street parking was provided for the tenants. Illegal converters should be encouraged to come forward and obtain one of these special permits without a penalty. This would enable the Assessor to get the full value of these properties reflected in the tax rolls and would also help City officials determine the actual inventory of housing units in Boston for planning purposes, such as projecting school enrollments and providing other public services.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The three neighborhoods surveyed were selected because conversion activity was known to be significant there. The BRA planning district boundaries were used to establish a list of the streets in each of the three neighborhoods. The City Assessor's books were then used to draw a random sample of homeowners. Owner-occupiers were identified by matching the address of the assessed property with the address to which the tax bill was sent. The first question on the survey instrument screened out any renters that may have made it through the selection process. The phone numbers of the selected homeowners were identified by using the 1985 edition of Cole's City Directory. Some phone numbers not listed in this directory were obtained by calling directory assistance.

Using the 1980 Census of Population counts shown in Table 7 as an approximate universe, the selection process resulted in a better than one-in-ten sample. Due to refusals, no responses and some renters slipping through the selection process, the ultimate sample size was about one in twenty, in terms of completed interviews.

The firm of Bell Associates, Inc., of Cambridge, Mass., conducted the interviews by telephone. The average length of an interview was eight minutes for non-converters and twenty minutes for converters. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish and Chinese. Interviewing started on August 7, 1985, and was completed on September 4. A total of six attempts spaced over two weeks were made to reach each member of the sample.

The "legal oversample" group was identified by picking out all the owner-occupied properties that had been the subject of cases before the Board of Appeal over the last six years. These conversions were all legal, because the property owners received approval for adding one or more units.

There are several reasons why converters may have been more likely than other homeowners not to cooperate with the interviewer. During the fourth and fifth day of interviewing, the Boston Globe ran front-page stories concerning corrupt officials in the Inspectional Services Department. Respondents may have thought that the interview was somehow connected with this investigation and may have been afraid of cooperating with the interviewer. It is also likely that converters may not have cooperated with the interviewer, despite repeated assurances of confidentiality, because they feared re-assessment or fines for illegally-added units . Indeed, the survey results revealed that many of the converted units were not assessed for the correct

number of units and several homeowners had added units illegally.

Using the observations of non-converting neighbors as a guide, it is evident that more conversion activity may be going on than was reported by the eight percent of the respondents who affirmed that they had added a unit. The survey results shed light on the type of conversions taking place, the characteristics of the converters, and the characteristics of those living in converted dwellings. However, the survey results should be used with caution as a means for estimating the total amount of conversion activity in the city of Boston.

TABLE 7

Housing Inventory
In Study Neighborhoods

	OWNED		RENTED		VACANT		TOTAL
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	
Allston-Brighton	4,503	15.2%	23,624	79.9%	1,424	4.8%	29,551
Jamaica Plain	4,504	28.8%	8,038	51.3%	3,123	19.9%	15,665
South End	1,582	11.5%	10,427	75.6%	1,788	13.0%	13,797
Total Boston	59,489	24.6%	158,968	65.9%	22,886	9.5%	241,343

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing 1980,
Neighborhood Statistics Data.

Interviews Undertaken and Completed

	Original Sample	Failed Interviews*	Completed Interviews	Completion Rate	Non-Converter Interviews	Converter Interviews	Percentage of All Owner-Occupiers Interviewed
Allston-Brighton	517	319	198	38.3%	195	3	4.4%
Jamaica Plain	573	358	215	37.5%	207	8	4.8%
South End	226	134	92	40.7%	67	25	5.8%
Oversample**	248	150	98	39.5%	73	25	0.2%
TOTAL	1,564	961	603	38.6%	542	61	

* Reasons for failed interviews include: disconnected numbers, respondents refused or not at home, and renters that were inadvertently selected. for the sample.

**Only 25 of the 98 completed interviews in the oversample group were with with converters. The other 73 were purchasers of a converted property who did not own the property at the time it was converted. This group was interviewed using the non-converter survey instrument, although their responses were not tabulated and presented along with the responses of the non-converters in the random sample.

1	EAST BOSTON	9	JAMAICA PLAIN
2	CHARLESTOWN	10	ROXBURY
3	SOUTH BOSTON	11A	DORCHESTER (North)
4	CENTRAL	11B	DORCHESTER (South)
5	BACK BAY/BEACON HILL	12	ROSLINDALE
6	SOUTH END	13	WEST ROXBURY
7	FENWAY/KENMORE	14	HYDE PARK
8	ALLSTON/BRIGHTON	15	MATTAPAN/FRANKLIN FIE

PLANNING DISTRICTS
Boston, MA

APPENDIX B: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

NEIGHBORHOOD	JP	- 1
	SE	- 2
	AB	- 3
CLASSIFICATION	R1	- 1
	R2	- 2
	R3	- 3
	R4	- 4
	RC	- 5

HOUSING CONVERSION STUDY: SURVEY OF HOME OWNERS
(Screening Questionnaire)

1. Do you or a member of your household own your home or do you rent?

Own - 1
Rent - 2

IF RENTER, SAY: That's the only question I have for renters. Thank you for your cooperation. Good bye. CONTINUE FOR OWNERS.

2. We're interested in the number of "independent" dwelling units there are on your property. By "independent" I mean a separate apartment with its own kitchen and at least one bathroom.

Using this definition, how many independent dwelling units are on your property, other than the one you live in? Do not include rooms for boarders unless they have their own kitchen and bathroom.

___ ___ (number)

IF NONE, GO TO QUESTION 4.

3. Did you add any of these dwelling units after you acquired the property?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES, GO TO LONG INTERVIEW GUIDE, Q 18.
IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 4.

4. Have you reduced the number of dwelling units in your building since you bought the property?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES: How many units did you remove? ___ (number)

5. Have you ever considered converting part of your house or garage in order to add one or more separate dwelling units to your property?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 6, IF YES CONTINUE:

5.(cont.)
Why did you want to add another unit?

_____

_____

Why didn't you carry out your plan?

_____

_____

Are you still considering adding one or more units?

Yes - 1
No - 2

6. Are you aware of any houses on your street that have had apartments added to them in the last five years?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES: Do you think these apartments have had a positive, a negative, or no effect on your neighborhood?

Positive - 1
Negative - 2
No effect - 3
Mixed effect - 4
Don't Know - 5

IF POSITIVE OR MIXED EFFECT: In what ways do you think these apartments have helped your neighborhood?

_____

_____

_____

IF NEGATIVE OR MIXED: In what ways do you think these apartments have hurt your neighborhood?

_____

_____

_____

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your house.

7. How many stories does your house have, not including the basement but including the attic?

___ ___ (number)

8. Is your building...

Detached? - 1
Semi-attached? - 2
A row house or apartment building? - 3

9. Approximately what year was your house built?

___ ___ ___ ___ (year)

10. How would you describe the other buildings in your neighborhood? Are they primarily...

Single-family homes? - 1
Two- to Four-family homes? - 2
Apartment Buildings? - 3
Non-residential buildings? - 4

11. And finally, I have a few questions to ask you about yourself. When did you move into your current residence?

___ ___ (year)

12. Is this the first home you have ever owned?

Yes - 1
No - 2

13. How many people are there in your household?

___ ___ (number)

14. Do you have any children under the age eighteen living with you?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES: How many? ___ ___ (number)

15. What is your marital status? Are you...

Single? - 1
Married? - 2
Separated? - 3
Divorced? - 4

16. Which ethnic group do you belong to? Are you...

White?	- 1
Black?	- 2
Hispanic?	- 3
Asian?	- 4
Native American?	- 5
Other?	- 6

17. What is your age? Are you in your...

20s?	- 1
30s?	- 2
40s?	- 3
50s?	- 4
60s or older?	- 5

18. In 1984, was your household income...

Less than $10,000?	- 1
Between $10,000 and 20,000?	- 2
Between $20,000 and 30,000?	- 3
Between $30,000 and 40,000?	- 4
Between $40,000 and 50,000?	- 5
Above $50,000?	- 6

Thank you very much for your cooperation. You have been most helpful. Goodbye.

(If the respondent asks, the findings from this survey will be available to the public when the study is finished.)

18. How many separate units did you add?

___ ___ (number)

19. What were your principle reasons for adding a unit (these units)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

20. I'm going to read you a list of reasons why people might add a unit to their property. Please tell me for each one whether it was a major factor, a minor factor, or not a factor in your decision:

Needed rental income to help cover mortgage payments

Major factor - 1
Minor factor - 2
Not a factor - 3

Needed rental income to help cover property maintenance costs

Major factor - 1
Minor factor - 2
Not a factor - 3

Needed rental income for other uses

Major factor - 1
Minor factor - 2
Not a factor - 3

Wanted to provide affordable housing for friend or relative

Major factor - 1
Minor factor - 2
Not a factor - 3

Wanted to increase the resale value of my property

Major factor - 1
Minor factor - 2
Not a factor - 3

Wanted a tenant to help look after my property

Major factor - 1
Minor factor - 2
Not a factor - 3

Wanted to get tax benefits from owning rental property

Major factor - 1
Minor factor - 2
Not a factor - 3

21. What part of your property did you use to add this unit (these units)? Did you...

	Yes	No
Convert the attic?	1	2
Convert the basement?	1	2
Convert the garage?	1	2
Subdivide the original unit?	1	2
Construct a new addition connected to the main building?	1	2
Construct a new unit not connected to the main building?	1	2
Convert any other structures on your property such as a tool shed, barn, or carriage house?	1	2
Other (please describe)?	1	2

_____

_____

_____

22. What type of unit(s) did you add?

Did you add a (any) studio apartment(s) (combined living-dining-sleeping area)?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES AND MORE THAN ONE UNIT ADDED:
How many studio apartments? ___ ___ (number)

Did you add a (any) one-bedroom apartment(s)?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES AND MORE THAN ONE UNIT ADDED:
How many 1-bedroom apartments? ___ ___ (number)

22. (cont.)
Did you add any two-bedroom apartment(s)?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES AND MORE THAN ONE UNIT ADDED:
How many 2-bedroom units? ___ ___ (number)

Did you add any three or more bedroom apartment(s)?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES AND MORE THAN ONE UNIT ADDED:
How many 3-bedroom units? ___ ___ (number)

23. Where is (are) the exterior entrance(s) to the unit(s)? Is there an (are there)...

	Yes	No
Outside entrance(s) separate from the entrance to your dwelling?	1	2
Outside entrance(s) common with your own?	1	2
Entrance(s) visible from the street?	1	2

24. Do you provide parking for the occupants of the additional unit(s) on your property?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES: How many spaces? ___ ___ (number)

25. A. Did you sell the new unit?
(Did you sell any of the new units?)

Yes - 1
No - 2
No, but vacant and for sale - 3

IF NO GO TO QUESTION 26.
IF YES AND MORE THAN ONE UNIT ADDED:

B. How many units did you sell? ___ ___ (number)

IF YES:

C. Was it (were any) sold as ...

	Yes	No
a condominium unit?	1	2
a cooperative unit?	1	2
a separate property after subdivision of the lot?	1	2

25. cont.
D. How much did it/they sell for?
GET AVERAGE PRICE IF MORE THAN ONE SOLD

___ ___ ___ ___ (in thousands of $)

IF VACANT: What is your asking price?
GET AVERAGE PRICE IF MORE THAN ONE FOR SALE

___ ___ ___ ___ (in thousands of $)

26. Was the new unit rented or is it for rent?
(Were any of the new units rented or are they for rent?)

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 27 B.

27. A. Is the new unit (Are any of the new units)... Rented for cash?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES AND MORE THAN ONE UNIT ADDED:
How many? ___ ___ (number)

B. Is the new unit (Are any of the new units) occupied, but no cash rent is collected?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES AND MORE THAN ONE UNIT ADDED:
How many? ___ ___ (number)

C. Is the new unit (Are any of the new units) vacant?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES AND MORE THAN ONE UNIT ADDED:
How many are vacant? ___ ___ (number)

IF ANY UNITS RENTED OR FOR RENT:

D. Is/are the unit(s) rented...

Furnished? - 1
Partially furnished? - 2
Unfurnished? - 3

E. What is the rent for this unit (these units)?
GET AVERAGE IF MORE THAN ONE UNIT FOR RENT

___ ___ ___ ___ ($ per month)

F. Does this rent include...

	Yes	No
Heat?	1	2
Electricity?	1	2
Water and sewer charges?	1	2

IF ALL THE UNITS ARE VACANT GO TO Q. 34.

IF ANY OF THE UNITS ARE OCCUPIED:
Now I would like to ask a few questions about the current occupants of the unit(s) you added.

28. How many people live in the unit(s) you added (in total)?

___ ___ (number)

29. How many of the occupants are over 60?

___ (number)

30. How many are children, aged 16 or under?

___ ___ (number)

31. About how old are the adults in the unit(s) you added? Are they

College students? - 1
Young adults (twenties or thirties)? - 2
Middle aged (forties or fifties)? - 3
Older/retired (sixty or older)? - 4
A mixture of different ages? - 5
Don't know - 6

32. Are any of the occupants related to you?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES: Please describe their relationship to you:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

33. What is the ethnic background of the occupants? Are they...

White?	- 1
Black ?	- 2
Hispanic?	- 3
Asian?	- 4
Native American?	- 5
Other?	- 6

34. Let's talk for a minute about the actual construction and financing involved in adding units to your property.

I'm going to read you a list of features in an apartment, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you... a) added, or b) repaired or replaced that item in adding units to your property.

	Yes	No
Wall(s)		
Did you add any walls?	1	2
Did you Repair or replace any walls?	1	2
Ceiling(s)		
Added	1	2
Repaired/replaced	1	2
Flooring		
Added	1	2
Repaired/replaced	1	2
Stairway(s)		
Added	1	2
Repaired/replaced	1	2
Doorway(s) or window(s)		
Added	1	2
Repaired/replaced	1	2
Electrical wiring		
Added	1	2
Repaired/replaced	1	2
Plumbing		
Added	1	2
Repaired/replaced	1	2
Kitchen		
Added	1	2
Repaired/replaced	1	2
Bathroom		
Added	1	2
Repaired/replaced	1	2

34. (cont.)

Roofing		
Added	1	2
Repaired/replaced	1	2
Foundation		
Added	1	2
Repaired/replaced	1	2
Furnace or heating system		
Added	1	2
Repaired/replaced	1	2
Water heater		
Added	1	2
Repaired/replaced	1	2
Porch or balcony		
Added	1	2
Repaired/replaced	1	2

35. Did you make any other improvements to your building in conjunction with the addition of unit(s), Such as....

	Yes	No
Exterior Siding or Masonry repair?	1	2
Exterior painting?	1	2
Interior painting?	1	2
Interior plaster work?	1	2
Landscaping?	1	2
Other (please describe)	1	2

---

36. In performing all these improvements, who did the most work (in terms of hours spent)? ONE ANSWER ONLY

Self and other family members - 1
Friends - 2
General contractor - 3
Sub-contractors - 4
Other - 5

IF OTHER: Please describe:_____

37. Who else helped?

	Yes	No
Self and other family members?	1	2
Friends?	1	2
General Contractor?	1	2
Sub-contractors?	1	2
Others?	1	2

At this point, let me remind you that your answers are completely confid
1.

38. What is your estimate of the total cost of adding this (these) unit(s)?

___ ___ ___ ___ (in thousands of $)

39. Did you obtain a loan for the conversion work?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 42

40. What type of loan(s) did you obtain?

	Yes	No
Second mortgage?	1	2
Commercial loan or line of credit?	1	2
A loan from friend or relative?	1	2
Borrowed against life insurance policy?	1	2
Other (please describe)		

---

41. From what type of institution(s), if any?

	Yes	No
Commercial bank?	1	2
Savings & Loan?	1	2
Life insurance company?	1	2
Credit union?	1	2
Government subsidized loan program?	1	2
Other (please describe)	1	2

42. Did you take out a building permit for any of these jobs?

Yes - 1
No - 2
Don't know - 3

IF YES: Why did you get the building permit?

DO NOT READ LIST, CIRCLE "1" FOR EACH REASON THE RESPONDENT MENTIONS:

Required by law	1
Contractor wouldn't work without one	1
Contractor took care of it	1
Other (describe)	1

---

42. (cont.)
IF NO: Why not?

DO NOT READ LIST, CIRCLE "1" FOR EACH REASON THE RESPONDENT MENTIONS:

Not required	1
Too much trouble	1
Don't want to be re-assessed	1
Permit fee is too expensive	1
Afraid work would not have been approved by building inspector	1
Other (describe)	1

---

43. Did you get a variance or approval of the Planning Board of Appeals to add a unit to your property?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES:

Why did you get a variance?

DO NOT READ LIST, CIRCLE "1" FOR EACH REASON THE RESPONDENT MENTIONS:

Required by law	1
Contractor wouldn't work without one	1
Wanted to protect my rights as a landlord	1
Other (describe)	1

How long did it take to get approval from the Planning Board?

___ ___ (number of months)

Did you have difficulty getting the variance from the Planning Board?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF NO: Why not?

DO NOT READ LIST, CIRCLE "1" FOR EACH REASON THE RESPONDENT MENTIONS:

43. (cont.)

Not required	1
Too much trouble	1
Don't want to be re-assessed	1
Variance procedure is too expensive	1
Afraid conversion would not have been approved	1
Other (describe)	1

---

44. Did you talk to your neighbors about your plans to convert?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES: Did they object to your plans?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES: What objections did they raise?

---

45. Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your house. How many stories does your house have, not including the basement, but including the attic?

___ ___ (number)

46. Is your building...

Detached? - 1
Semi-attached? - 2
A row house or apartment building? - 3

47. Approximately what year was your house built?

___ ___ ___ ___ (year)

48. How would you describe the other buildings in your neighborhood? Are they primarily...

Single-family homes? - 1
Two- to Four-family homes? - 2
Apartment Buildings? - 3
Non-residential buildings? - 4

We're almost at the end now. I just have a few questions to ask you about yourself.

49. When did you move into your current residence?

___ ___ ___ ___ (year)

50. Is this the first home you have ever owned?

Yes - 1
No - 2

51. How many people are there in your household?

___ ___ (number)

52. Do you have any children under the age eighteen living with you?

Yes - 1
No - 2

IF YES: How many? ___ ___ (number)

53. What is your marital status? Are you...

Single? - 1
Married? - 2
Separated? - 3
Divorced? - 4

54. Which ethnic group do you belong to? Are you...

White? - 1
Black? - 2
Hispanic? - 3
Asian? - 4
Native American? - 5
Other? - 6

55. What is your age? Are you in your...

20s? - 1
30s? - 2
40s? - 3
50s? - 4
60s or older? - 5

56. In 1984, was your household income...

Less than $10,000?	- 1
Between $10,000 and 20,000?	- 2
Between $20,000 and 30,000?	- 3
Between $30,000 and 40,000?	- 4
Between $40,000 and 50,000?	- 5
Above $50,000?	- 6

Thank you very much for your cooperation. You have been most helpful. Goodbye.

(If the respondent asks, the findings from this survey will be available to the public through the Joint Center for Housing Studies when the report is finished.)

RECORD THE NEIGHBORHOOD HERE:

RECORD THE CLASSIFICATION HERE:

APPENDIX C: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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January 7, 1986

MEMO TO: Alex Ganz

FROM: Jacques N. Gordon JNG

RE: Master Copy of the Conversion Study

Enclosed is the Master Copy of the Conversion Study. You may keep this copy as your own. The Joint Center now has its own Master as well. The tables are enlarged and should be more readable now.